

Professional FOREST CARE

"SHARING KNOWLEDGE OF TREES AND THE FOREST"

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June 9, 2014

Mr. Brandon Haskell
Constituent Relations
State Representative Theresa Abed
Lansing, MI

Dear Mr. Haskell,

Thank you for your email with announcement of the upcoming hearing on June 10, 2014 regarding the bills pending that would deregulate the profession of forestry as authorized by Article 21 of the 1980 Occupational Code, Act 299.

My simple statement.

1. The Forestry Profession should not be deregulated by the State of Michigan.
2. It is unfortunate that the Michigan Legislature would be at the place to even consider forester deregulation as authorized by Article 21.
3. It is equally disappointing that the effort and subsequent discussion on forester deregulation as it relates to Article 21 does not include the provision to address 'forester professionalism' as required in the language of the current Qualified Forest Act or the Commercial Forest Act. If that effort is in fact being made but not communicated in this announcement of the Regulatory Reform Committee then a real disservice is being committed and should be remedied immediately.

The State of Michigan first recognized the significance of long term forest land management policy with the enactment of The Private Forest Reserve Act, P.A 86-1917. Initially a land tax bill, the intent was to encourage farm landowners to carry cut-over timber land for future forest growth at the lowest affordable tax liability. The Department of Conservation was established in 1925 and within the department were employed some of the first 'professional foresters' at the time. In the same year, The Pearson Act, Act 94 of 1925, known as the Commercial Forest Act, carried legislative authority for the Department to review and verify the forest inventory of lands sought to be enrolled for the benefit of lower land taxes and long term forest development. Both pieces of legislation provided property tax incentives for properly managed forest land, land managed under the professional evaluation and prescription of 'A Forester'. In 1925 there seemed to be no lack of understanding as to who was a forester, and what credentials a forester possessed. Professional forestry was a necessary compliment to the challenge of management of the God given resource that provided the first infusion of true wealth into Michigan through the timbering of the forest of our state. Good forest management was dedicated to the benefit of future generations. The Occupational Code of 1980 included foresters and provided for registration, that is, use of the TITLE of Registered Forester. The Commercial Forest act was subsequently amended to include that forest plans submitted by landowners must be written by a natural resource professional or a Registered Forester.

The steps to deregulate the profession of forestry will not take away my right to earn a living in this state. That statement may surprise you. Excuse me for rebuking the arrogance of government but this discussion isn't about my job because my opportunity for engaging in professional forestry is afforded by the free market, not government. This discussion should be about sustaining the historical commitment this state has made to forest stewardship since 1925. What the proposed deregulation of forestry does do is to illuminate the level of incompetence that has blighted our Legislature. Who in the legislature cannot understand that the taxes collected on gross forest

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industry wealth, estimated at over 12 billion dollars annually, cannot sustain the (part-time requirement) of a full time position of a bureaucrat to administer a 'list of professional foresters'?

The Legislatures, Executives and Courts of Michigan over the past 15 years have demonstrated a disregard for responsible fiscal management resulting from the lack of effective budgeting of tax generated revenue paid by the hard working class of citizens and free market entrepreneurs of this great state.

The blight of partisan political maneuvering has further blinded the eyes of our Governor and Legislators from recognizing the vision of thirty fold and sixty fold increase in the provision of the renewable forest. Photosynthesis is wealth to a forest minded person and instead of deregulating forestry as a 'profession' we should be recognizing that it is the key to growth and prosperity to a part of our natural resource base that is grossly under-utilized. The state's land base is 39 million acres and over half of that area is classified as commercial forest. The annual growth input to the standing timber inventory is far more than the drain of harvesting. We grow more than we use.

The following goals are recommended as a successful 'positive' path forward to assure the sustained provision of the forest resource for abundant benefits available for Michigan's future generations.

1. Assure every existing wood using mill in Michigan it will not run out of wood over the next 30 years.
2. Allow every existing wood using mill in Michigan the opportunity to expand or initiate new markets to utilize our timber resources. Grow the forest industry to utilize 75% of annual growth by the year 2025, 80% by the year 2030 and 90% by the year 2035.
3. Allow the industry to develop a comprehensive forest health plan that will sustain the natural productivity of the forest to the growing demands of utilization.
4. Enhance and intensify the comprehensive forest fire suppression plan for the entire state as it would apply to public and private lands to protect the growing stock of already established and intensively managed forest lands.

To place this letter and the entire discussion in proper context, it is necessary to address my political position in these statements. I will never vote for a democrat because they do not share similar economic philosophy, although they are great friends and we do enjoy welcoming 'converts' from time to time when they have seen the light. I will not vote for any Republican that does not commit to balanced budgets, encourages growth of the private sector and acknowledgment that it is free market capital that creates jobs, not government. Finally, if Governor Snyder signs any law that would ignore the role of professional forestry in the astounding 'future' potential of the forest industry in this state, I will not be joining "Team Nerd" for 2014.

Sincerely,

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